

C H U R C H N E W S

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by the Northern Ecumenical Institute

Sigtuna, Sweden

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No. 17

May 30th, 1956.

New Forms for Northern Church Co-operation.

The Executive Committee of the Northern Ecumenical Institute, recently assembled in Oslo, is working on a number of plans for the strengthening of the inter-Church co-operation in the Northern countries. Thus, a conference is being planned for preachers and spiritual guides from the Northern countries at which attempts will be made at mapping out certain aspects of the spiritual situation and the attitude of modern man towards the Church and Christianity. Furthermore, the possibilities, means, and methods available for religious work in this situation will be discussed.

The work on the question of "Christianity and Justice", taken up by the Institute, will be continued at a new conference following upon two previous ones, in Norway and Finland. Moreover, the possibility of closer contacts among the Northern committees working on liturgical questions will be examined.

Occasioned by the meeting of the Executive Committee, the Director of the Northern Ecumenical Institute, Dr. Harry Johansson, in a statement to the Norwegian press says,

"It is a fact that, although we have been careful, since the War, to let our Churches be represented at great events in the Churches of our neighbouring countries, the Northern Christian fellowship is, never the less, weaker than before the War. The strong national element underlying the various religious movements in the Northern countries before the War is now giving way to stronger international interests. To-day, the Northern idea seems to many people to be of a somewhat narrow perspective. However, we believe that Northern co-operation, also in the religious sphere, is still of great importance and we have experienced that this co-operation and the feeling of fellowship springing up from it has a wide appeal".

Northern Ecumenical Meeting in Sigtuna this Summer.

For the third time the Northern Ecumenical Institute has sent out invitations to a Northern Ecumenical meeting from Aug. 9 to Aug. 13, this time to take place at Sigtuna, the Swedish Church work centre where also the Institute is situated. The two previous meetings, attracting lively interest, took place in Denmark in 1952 and 1954.

The meeting will open with a lecture on "The Church and the Longing of Our Age" by Bishop Manfred Björkqvist, formerly Stockholm, who is the driving force behind these meetings. The motto of the meeting will be "Under the Lead-

ership of the Holy Spirit" and lectures and debates will be concentrated around the question of the individual and the fellowship - the fellowship of the Church, of community, and of the denominations.

Behind the invitation stand all the ecumenical organizations in the Northern countries.

Northern "Small Churches"-Meeting in Copenhagen.

100 representatives of the movements within the Lutheran Churches in the Northern countries working for the erection of new churches in the evergrowing big cities, the so-called "Small Churches"-movements, will meet in Copenhagen at the end of this month in order to discuss common problems. In connection with the conference a public meeting will be held at which Bishop Bo Giertz, Göteborg (Gothenburg), and the Secretary General of "De Samvirkende Menighedsplejer" ("The Co-operating Parochial Welfare Centres") in Denmark, the Rev. W. Westergaard Madsen, will speak on "The Importance of Voluntaryness in the Welfare State".

Great Attendance at the Northern Conference for Clergymen in Iceland.

The Northern Conference for Clergymen, this year to be held in Iceland on account of the 900th anniversary of the establishment of the first see in Iceland, has obtained wide attendance in spite of the rather costly travelling expenses for participants from the other Northern countries. The 200 berths available on the Norwegian passenger steamer "Brand VI", chartered by the Northern Clergymen's Associations, are fully booked up and it is now contemplated to charter a passenger plane to accommodate those clergymen wishing to take part, but unable to obtain passages on the boat.

The meeting is to take place in Reykjavik from August 2 to August 10 instead of at the beginning of July in connection with the Jubilee celebrations, as was first planned, because of the impossibility of chartering a boat at that time. The programme will include a reception, given by the President of Iceland, for all the participants in the meeting.

DENMARK.

Consecration of Bishop Beyer on Television.

The solemn consecration of the new Bishop of Haderslev, the Right Rev. Frode Beyer, which took place in the Cathedral of Copenhagen on April 22 was broadcast on television for the first time. Present at the ceremony were King Frederik IX of Denmark and Queen Ingrid, the Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, and a great number of prominent people from both Church and civil life in Denmark.

In an interview with "Kristeligt Dagblad" ("Christian Daily") immediately before the Consecration the Bishop, whose diocese borders up to Germany, said, amongst other things,

"To my mind the relationship between the Danish and the German Churches in North Slesvig (the Danish part of Slesvig) is satisfactory. The German pastors in North Slesvig are at absolute liberty to speak either in Danish or German. We acknowledge the fact that one's everyday language and one's sympathies do not always agree. On the other hand, Danish pastors are likewise allowed to speak in German if they like."

Bishop Beyer further mentioned the situation in the towns in South Jutland where there are German Rectors appointed by the Danish National Church. "In the country", the Bishop went on, "there is an excellent relationship between the Danish congregations and the German free congregations who are allowed to make use of the parish churches against paying a reasonable fee to cover the cost of cleaning, heating, etc."

The new "Language Act" of the National Church of Slesvig-Holsten which permits Danish pastors south of the frontier, in certain cases, to preach in German is said by Bishop Beyer to be a step in the right direction. With regard to conditions in the frontier region, on the whole, the new Bishop said,

"I have always been especially interested in a good climate in the border region and I will, of course, do my utmost to further this. But in a frontier region nothing happens quickly. Perhaps it is more true here than in other places that, "more haste, less speed". It is my sincere wish that a friendly neighbourly relationship may grow up between Denmark and Germany, also in the religious sphere."

Experiment with Children's Services.

The parish of Vigerslev in a typical workers' district in Copenhagen is cheerfully experimenting with new working methods that will break down the barriers between the Church and modern city-dwellers. New ways are being tried out, particularly with regard to children's services, and one of the clergymen at the church, the Rev. H.C. Lorentzen, telling about it in the monthly "Kirkens Front" ("The Church Frontline"), says,

"The goal is to make the children themselves take active part in the service. The huge and distant altar behind the altar-rails must disappear. Instead, the children themselves decorate a smaller altar at the entrance to the chancel. The service opens and closes with a procession. Two children, carrying lighted candles in candle-sticks, lead the procession and place the candles on each side of the small altar. Following next upon the "the candle-carriers" come the choir, "the reader", carrying the Bible, and the pastor, wearing chasuble. The music is provided by a small harmonium in the chancel, accompanied by various "secular" instruments played by children (violin, flute, violin cello, etc.). But there is no professional choir. The children themselves are responsible for the choir responses and the antiphonal anthems of which there are actually quite a lot in Vigerslev church, because, among other things, the Bishop has given permission for "Kyrie Eleison" and "Gloria" to be introduced into the church service. The epistle or lesson is read by "the reader", one of the children, and the gospel is read by the pastor. The Creed is sung or read by all in chorus. A Christening, taking place right after the reading of the lesson, is a dramatic interlude of immense interest to the children."

"This is the framework of the service, but now and then short religious plays, enacted by the children, take the place of the sermon and on festive occasions pantomimic tableaux are also included in the service. At the Harvest Festival the church was not decorated with sheaves of corn, as is usually the case in Danish churches, the children from a city not being acquainted with a sheaf, but the children brought all sorts of fruits from the gardens of Vigerslev and placed them on the altar."

"The background for these experiments, which have been very successful and time after time filled the church with eager and actively engaged kids, is the fact that the Christian church service at bottom is a drama," Rev. H.C. Lorentzen concludes his report.

New Film by Gerhardt Rasmussen Produced by Bodil Ipsen.

The Copenhagen clergyman and author, the Rev. Gerhardt Rasmussen, whose book, "Det sande ansigt" (The True Face), as well as its screen version, achieved great success some years ago both in Denmark and abroad, is having yet another book adapted for the screen, viz. "Kaptajnen behøver ingen orlov" ("The Captain Needs No Leave"). The producer will be the well-known actress and producer, Mrs. Bodil Ipsen.

The shooting of the new film will begin in the near future.

Inter-Communal Fellowship Among Churches of Denmark, England, and Scotland.

Based on a Royal Decree, the Danish Ministry of Church Affairs has issued a circular to the Bishops in the Danish Lutheran National Church informing them that members of the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland may be admitted to Holy Communion in the Danish churches belonging to the National Church, in so far as the pastor concerned is willing to serve the person in question.

The Decree and the Circular are the consequence by Danish authorities of the successful negotiations on this matter carried out by the highest ecclesiastical authorities in England, Scotland, and Denmark.

Nordic "Religious Days" in Danish Country Parish.

The establishment of "friendship towns" between the Northern countries, in many places the result of the efforts of the Association "Norden", has also led to several inter-Nordic Church arrangements. Even small parishes in the country are in contact with parishes of somewhat the same size in the other Northern countries and this has also been of effect in religious circles.

Thus the small railway town of Brande, in the middle of Jutland, has organized "Nordic Religious Days" from May 1 to May 6 with participation from Brande's "friendship parishes" in the other Northern countries and also from a parish in South Slesvig with whose Danish inhabitants Brande is in a similar friendly contact. The "Days" included a number of church services and addresses by speakers from the Northern countries.

Behind the "Nordic Religious Days" stand both the parochial council of Brande as well as a number of Christian associations belonging to the various sections of the Church and also the local branch of the association "Norden".

Dean N.K. Otte, the driving force behind the planning of the "Days", states that the purpose of these "Days" has been to give the guests from the rest of the Northern countries an impression of Church life in an ordinary Danish country parish, while at the same time giving the local inhabitants an idea of religious life in the other Northern countries through addresses delivered by speakers from those countries.

European Y-Men's Club Conference in Copenhagen.

82 representatives of the Y-Men's Clubs in Belgium, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark met in Copenhagen at the end of April for the second European Y-Men's Club conference. (Y.M.C. is the designation for the clubs founded in latter years by former members of the Y.M.C.A. for the solving of a number of religious and practical projects in further continuation of the work of the Y.M.C.A.)

The Section Leader, Mr. Sixten Lagebrandt, Sweden, presented the report on the work and was re-elected Section Leader. As the site of next year's conference was chosen Torino in Italy.

At the meeting in Copenhagen a donation collected by the Clubs in European countries was handed over for Y.M.C.A. work in Porkkala district, recently returned to Finland by the Soviet Union. At the same time it was resolved to take up a new inter-European project, e.g. for three years to raise the sum of 20 U.S. dollars per Club for the training of a missionary in Belgian Congo.

The Danish Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, in her welcoming address at the opening meeting said, "It has been a pleasure to me to become acquainted with the ideas behind the Y-Men's Clubs. In a world where man's fear and anxiety for the future is steadily increasing in spite of ever greater possibilities for improved living conditions, due to technical science, it is important, across the frontiers, further to deepen the knowledge of other people's trains of thought and actions. In spite of the great progress of science, two thirds of the world population are still living on, or below, starvation level. We in the Western Hemisphere have not used our achievements to serve other people, but to oppress them and exploit them. In order to change this historical pattern, of which Denmark also is a part, it is necessary for the individual to make a personal effort. The Y.M.C. is resting on a Christian vision, and a Christian is a free man, although at the same time a servant of all. May this conference prove to be a source of new inspiration to the important work of the Y.M.C.

FINLAND

New Diocese Set Up in Lapua (Lappo).

The Finnish President has issued a proclamation stating that from July 1 this year a new diocese within the Lutheran Church will be set up. The new diocese will include 64 congregations with app. half a million inhabitants. A little more than half of the parishes will be transferred from the Archdiocese in Turku (Åbo) and the rest from Kuopio and Tampere (Tammerfors). The seat of the new Bishop will be at Lapua (Lappo) where the church, build in 1827, has possibilities of becoming an imposing cathedral. The new bishop is to be elected before July 1.

Already at the Synod in 1953 it was decided to apply to Government for the establishment of a new diocese and, in connection with the 800th jubilee of the Finnish Church, the Government then in power set aside the amount of money required on the State Budget as a jubilee gift to the Church.

Danish and Swedish Gifts to Porkkala.

At a special function at the Finnish Embassy in Copenhagen, the Editor-in-Chief of "Kristeligt Dagblad", Mr. Edvard Petersen, recently handed over a gift token of 55.000 Dan. crowns to the Finnish Bishop, the Right Rev. Martti Simojoki, who was visiting Denmark on the occasion of the consecration of Bishop Beyer. The donation has been collected among the readers of "Kristeligt Dagblad" for the purchase of an organ for the church in Kyrkslätt, one of the two churches in the Porkkala district, returned to Finland by the Soviet Union.

"Svenska Kyrkohjälpen" ("The Swedish Church Aid Committee") has also made a Porkkala collection which amounts to 100.000 Sw. crowns. This sum will also be used for the rebuilding of the church in Kyrkslätt.

Extensive Work by Deaconesses in Finnish National Church.

At the moment there are no less than 450 deaconesses working in the Finnish congregations and, on an average, each one of them pays 1000 calls a year to sick people or to socially stricken homes. Out of the funds available to the Church through taxation, 150 million Finnish marks are spent on salaries to these deaconesses and an equal amount is spent on the work itself. There are at least 7.000 special town and district committees for relief work and, besides, there are 2.000 clubs whose members are actively engaged in this deaconship service.

This information is supplied, in an interview, by Bishop O.K. Heliövaara, Uleåborg, who is chairman of the committee in charge of the annual collection in church for this kind of Service, "Faelles Ansvar" ("Common Responsibility"), which last year amounted to 89,6 million Fin. marks.

New Commotion Regarding Teetotalism in Finland.

A report, now before the Ministry, suggests that the distribution of alcohol be facilitated by the establishment of new sales centres, by giving permission to sell more alcohol in more shops, and by allowing alcohol to be sent by mail.

This report has given rise to renewed commotion regarding the question of teetotalism and to new discussions between the Moderation Party and the Temperance Movement. While the adherents of the Moderation Party claim to follow a true-to-life policy, only aiming at keeping the consumption of alcohol within "reasonable limits" and endeavouring to increase the consumption of wine at the expense of gin or brandy, the Teetotalers declare that, of course, good habits are of value also in this respect, but that nothing is more dangerous than making the nation "alcohol-minded". They point out the dreadful destruction of individuals, of homes, and of community caused by alcohol and for this reason they advocate total abstinence.

Also for the Christian Temperance Movement the stir caused by the report has resulted in revived activity.

Co-operation Between the Religious and Civic Youth Movements.

On June 23 it is 75 years since the first Finnish youth association was founded in Kaukava. Lt. Col. Yrjö Vasama, Secretary General of the Youth Organizations since 1949, in an interview with the paper "Kotimaa" emphasizes that the foundation for the Associations' activities, as put down in the statutes, has been, and is still, "the Christian-ethical outlook on life, and love of country." Total abstinence is considered part of this foundation. The Youth Associations have had a particularly important influence on the development in the country districts and as they are non-political they have been able to attract young people from all quarters and thus acted as a creative factor of fellowship.

On the initiative of the "Förbundet för Kristlig Kultur" ("The Alliance for Christian Culture") and "Församlingsinstitutet" ("The Congregational Institute") the leaders of the more nationally inclined part of the Youth Associations and the leaders of the youth movements within the Church have met for common discussions, and through these acquired a sense of mutual trust and responsibility for one another.

Experienced Dean Optimistic About the Future of the Church.

The Dean of Tampere (Tammerfors) retired recently after having served for

more than 50 years, and 47 of these in Tampere without interruption. In a farewell interview the Dean sums up his experiences in the following words,

"When I began as a pastor conditions were, on the whole, quiet. People went to church frequently and preaching was generally along so-called central lines. Later on came times when our people was attracted by many interests - social, political, and economical. The pastor had the feeling that only a certain, limited group of people was "in his hand". Now it seems to me as if the clergy once more is about to find its way to the nation. The contact is wider and, at the same time, working methods are more varied. Allowing for the fact that fewer people go to church, there is, never the less, no reason for pessimism when we consider the position and duty of the Church in present times. The Church, and the new generation of clergymen in particular, must realize that times have changed. The new times demand new efforts. It is of primary importance to make the laity actively responsible. The clergy alone cannot manage everything. In my opinion, the religious press and literature is of great value. To me, their constant contact with the homes is of far greater importance than the mustering of big audiences now and then at a few meetings. I look upon the future of the Church with great optimism, even though we must remember that circumstances have changed radically."

ICELAND.

Gifts to Church of Iceland Being Collected in Other Northern Countries.

On the occasion of the 800 years' jubilee for the establishment of the first see in Iceland, gifts to the Icelandic Church are, at the moment, being collected in the other Northern countries. The gifts will be presented in the course of celebrations in Reykjavik and Skálholt on July 1.

Thus, a sum of 50.000 Dan. crowns have been collected by Danish-Icelandic circles in Denmark to be used for the building of a Danish organ for the new church to be erected in Skálholt. A committee, headed by the Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, will be in charge of the proper use of the money, and the Minister will personally hand over a gift token at the Jubilee celebrations. Besides, gifts are being collected among clergymen and others interested in the other Northern countries.

The Church of Iceland has invited a number of representatives of the Churches in the other Northern countries to the Jubilee. The official Danish delegates will be the Right Rev. Hans Øllgaard, Bishop of Odense, and the Rector of Strø, the Rev. Finn Tulinius, who is one of the leading men in Danish-Icelandic Church co-operation.

NORWAY.

Forest Clearing Provides Money for Religious Work.

This summer 150 undergraduates and high-school students will clear 5.000 hectares of forest and mountain scrub. The 30.000 Norw. crowns thus earned will be used for religious work among undergraduates and high-school students.

It is the Norwegian Christian Undergraduates' and High-School Students' Union that has taken the initiative for this enterprise and the young people

will give their time and labour during the summer holidays in order to raise more funds for evangelization work.

Last year a similar scheme was carried out by 120 undergraduates and high-school students who laid 1100 metres of cable across the mountains and thus earned 13,000 Norw. crowns.

Out of the 30,000 crowns earned this summer it will be possible to pay the salaries of three secretaries for one year, and while the young people spend their time in healthy surroundings, both spiritually and physically, the summer's employment will also have a direct evangelizing importance, in as much as the young people on Sundays will take part in church services and religious meetings in the vicinity of their working place in the Vistra Valley and at these meetings will bring personal testimonies of faith.

The Secretary in Bergen in charge of this project, telling about it in the paper "Dagen", further states that the work of the Undergraduates' and High-School Students' Union is in very encouraging progress. The interest for hearing the Word of God is still growing, there is good attendance at the meetings, and to all appearances there will be still more participants in the 10 summer camps planned for this year than there were last year when 1400 participants were mustered.

New Sports Pastor and Wholetime Factory Pastor.

The Tønsberg Diocesan Council has appointed a clergyman with the express duty of contacting athletes in the diocese, the Rev. C.W. Krohn-Hansen. Until a year ago the Diocese employed such a "sports pastor", but since his appointment to another living there has not been anyone. Having the work of the new pastor in mind, among other things, a conference was held at the end of April at Norefjell with representatives from both the Church and the Athletes. The chairman of the Norwegian Athletes' Association, Mr. Arthur Ruud, and the Bishop of the diocese, the Right Rev. Dr. Bjarne Skard, among others, took part in the conference.

Almost simultaneously it was announced that the Jonas Øgland Factories at Sandness had appointed a Methodist minister, Rev. Reidar Skarung, as full-time social worker and minister, following upon an experimental part-time appointment at the factory. Rev. R. Skarung says that he has more than enough to do in the factory in both capacities. He is the first full-time factory minister in Norway.

In this connection it may also be mentioned that the Diocesan Council of Bjørgvin again this year is sending a clergyman to Greenland to serve, during the summer, among the 1500 Norwegians fishing along the coasts of Greenland.

Extensive Religious Social Building Programme in Oslo.

The Home Mission in Oslo has now obtained permission from the authorities to begin the erection of one of the biggest religious-social institutions in the Northern countries. The building will cover an area of 850 square-metres, will reach a height of 6 storeys, and will cost 3,5 million Norw. crowns.

The building is to form the frame-work of a large-scale relief and rehabilitation programme, a "bridge from swamp to society" as it has been called, and efforts will here be made to bring people from an existence of prisons and no homes to a life of work and modern society.

There will be room for 140 men, each one calculated to stay for 3 - 6 months, and in the course of their stay they will be trained up to a normal eight-hour working day in an environment of light industry. There will also be an infirmary with 18 beds for psychological and psychiatric treatment, a gymnasium, a canteen, and a chapel. Through work, and also in other ways, it will be possible for the men to qualify for moving from dormitories with 6 beds to 3-bed rooms or single rooms.

Great care will be taken to create a home-like atmosphere without the character of an institution through choice of equipment and furnishings. Each floor, accommodating 20-30 men, will make up a "family" by itself under the guidance of a Social Assistant. Lectures, study groups, and cosy evenings will be arranged floor by floor.

The new social building is based on the motto, often voiced by the Secretary General of the Oslo Home Mission, the Rev. Andreas Grasmø, "In Christian relief work only the best is good enough."

The Summer's Religious Broadcasts on the Norwegian Radio.

The religious broadcasts on the Norwegian radio will also this summer be rather extensive, it appears from the programme outlines just published for the summer half-year.

In the daily morning devotions, 15 % of which are of Free Church nature and the rest in accordance with the National Church, a few series will deal with a certain fundamental subject for four consecutive days. Transmissions of church services will continue to the usual extent.

Three series already running, "How Shall We Live?", "From the Treasury of the Church", and the Radio Magazine for Church and Mission will continue with monthly broadcasts and, furthermore, there will be four programmes during July with the common title, "We Open the Bible." The problem of the Sermon on the Mount and Christian compromises will be dealt with in a programme entitled "Are We Serious About Our Christian Belief?". Finally it may be mentioned that a number of features are being planned giving a picture of religious life in a small West rural parish and possibly also a corresponding feature from a small town.

The Norwegian Radio employs a special Programme Secretary in charge of the religious material, the Rev. Sigurd Lunde.

Humane Ethical Association Founded in Oslo.

A short time ago a "Humane Ethical Association" was founded in Oslo with the purpose of being "an organ for people who will work for the solution of problems of ethical nature on the basis of methodical reasoning and scientific knowledge, irrespective of religious and metaphysical doctrines." Dr. Kristian Horn was elected President of the new association and Professor Gabriel Langfeldt, M.D., among others, is a member of the Executive Committee.

The Association will try to establish schools or school-classes with a humane-ethical instruction instead of religious instruction, will work for "temporal Confirmation" and easier access to interment without clerical assistance, make the registration of births a non-clerical matter, and work for a more festive civil marriage ceremony.

SWEDEN.

Bishops Protest to Minister of Church Affairs.

The Bishops' Conference of the Swedish National Church has published a strongly worded protest against the abolition by the Minister of Church Affairs of certain livings in the city of Stockholm. The Note of Protest was handed to the Minister, Mr. Persson, in person by three of the Bishops.

The Note described the recent regulation of parishes in Stockholm, resulting in the abolition of a number of livings, as "unsatisfactory and of a fatal nature to religious life." In several cases livings have been abolished in opposition to the wishes of the congregations concerned as well as those of the Ecclesiastical authorities so that it is actually a question whether the parish organization is able to function properly at the moment.

The Bishops further complain of the increased unwillingness of late on the part of the Ministry to establish new livings in the rapidly growing parishes in the environs of Stockholm - also here contrary to the wish of the Ecclesiastical authorities. The explanation by the Ministry that there is a shortage of clergymen in certain dioceses is rejected by the Bishops who strongly emphasize that the organization of the Church must be in accordance solely with its requirements, and thereupon the Ecclesiastical administration of the diocese concerned must be responsible for the best possible distribution of the clerical labour available. In conclusion the Bishops declare that it is essential to the continued trustful co-operation between Church and State that the State does not put hindrances in the way of adjustments of the ecclesiastical organization made necessary by the rapid growth of population in the cities.

Shortly after the handing over of the Note, an unanimous resolution by a conference for members of the parochial councils in the diocese of Linköping was published demanding an extension of the ecclesiastical organization and an increase in the number of livings, especially in the big cities. The Resolution points out that the population of the country has increased with 2 million inhabitants in the last 50 years and that the extension of Church organization has not been in step with this increase.

Large Scale Religious Campaign Preparatory to Elections in the Autumn.

"Fight for a Christian Community - Elect Christians to Parliament." This appeal, blazing forth from blue-white posters, will catch the eyes of constituents all over the country in ample time for the Swedish Parliamentary Elections this autumn.

The financing of this poster campaign, organized by the Committee for Christian Responsibility towards Community is to be secured through contributions from private individuals and institutions. The Committee, composed of representatives of the Lutheran National Church as well as the various Free Churches, has also planned a big demonstration meeting in Stockholm in the spring which will make propaganda for a stronger Christian influence in political life.

It is already now certain that several prominent Christian personalities will be nominated for the Elections by the various Parties.

Evangelical National Missionary Society Celebrates Centenary.

Next month the Evangelical National Missionary Society, a very active pietistically inclined movement, may celebrate its 100 years' jubilee with festivities lasting for a week from June 10 to June 17. The chief celebration will take place in the famous "Golden Hall" in the City Hall of Stockholm to which the King as well as the Minister of Church Affairs and prominent civil servants are invited. The Archbishop and the Bishop of Stockholm of the Lutheran National Church are also invited together with representatives of all other denominations in Sweden.

During the 100 years the Evangelical National Missionary Society has been a Society for both Home and Foreign Mission. In spite of its comparative smallness (app. 75,000 members) the Society supports a number of religious institutions, employs some 300 preachers in Sweden, and more than 100 missionaries in Africa and India.

Occasioned by the Centenary, a new Biography about Rosenius will be published by Mr. Sten Lodin, secondary school teacher, probably the most comprehensive and distinguished biography about this man who is the Society's most widely read author whose books are also studied in a number of other countries.

West Swedish Motel Serving as Religious Centre of Culture.

Last summer a motel was opened at the Mjörn Lake not so very far from Göteborg which by now has already developed into a Christian centre of culture.

The motel, three storeys high and provided with ultra-modern equipment, contains, besides the usual motel facilities, various meeting halls where religious, cultural, political, and other associations may meet. Moreover, entertainments are often arranged for the guests in the shape of concerts, shows, or exhibitions. During the coming spring and summer season a number of purely Christian programmes have been planned, including singing and music as well as meetings for both guests and local inhabitants of the parish at which causeries will be given by staff members of religious movements and the Temperance Movement.

The owner of the motel is a member of the Mission Covenant Church.

Exchange of Workers on Religious Basis Between Sweden and Germany.

The Y.M.C.A. in West Germany and Sweden have taken the initiative for an exchange of workers with a social-ethical as well as a religious aspect. The first beginning was made by an agreement between the Volkswagen-factories in Germany and the Scania-Vabis factory in Sweden to exchange two workers every three months on the recommendation of the Y.M.C.A. The workers concerned receive the same pay and social benefits as the other workers in the factory which they visit and they are given an opportunity to work in various sections of the factory so that they may learn as much as possible. In their spare time they are to take part in the work of the local Y.M.C.A. and thus make a contribution towards mutual understanding in this sphere also.

The plan is to extend this scheme so that a similar arrangement may be made between other concerns in Sweden and Germany who are in contact with each other.

Swedish Committee for Home Ecumenicity.

"Svenska Ekumeniska Nämnden" ("Swedish Ecumenical Council") has set up a committee for home ecumenicity with the object partly, of studying the theological problems separating the Lutheran National Church from the Free Churches and partly, of dealing with the frictions arising in practical matters among the denominations. The Committee is divided in two sections, each one numbering 5 members (2 belonging to the National Church, 2 to the Free Churches, and 1 to the Student Movement), to deal with the two kinds of problems.

Church Service for All Couples Married in 1955.

A church service of a very special kind took place recently in the Gustav Adolf church in Hälsingborg (Sweden) with the assistance of all the pastors employed at the church.

Every one of the couples married in the church during the past year were invited to take part in the service which was accompanied by wedding music by Wagner och Beethoven, and so many had accepted the invitation that the church was crowded to the last seat. As part of the service, the wedding ritual was read and the Rector of the church, the Rev. Gunnar Stenberg, warmly appealed to the young couples to guard their marriage and renew their vows to one another.

The purpose of the service was to strengthen the new marriages and the background for it was the increasing number of divorces, taking place especially during the first year of married life.

Swedish Baptist Delegation on Its Visit to Soviet Union.

The 6 Swedish Baptist leaders recently returned from a visit to the Soviet Union, on their home-coming related that they had taken part in 14 meetings and church services with a total of 30.000 participants in Leningrad, Moscow, Tallinn, and Riga. They had the impression that there was a great religious longing in the Soviet. The Swedish Baptists have already previously had good contacts with the Russian Baptist leaders and the ties between the two Baptist communities have been further strengthened by visits paid by such delegations.

The more objective information provided by the members of the delegation on their return is, on the whole, along the lines of other reports by delegations who have visited the Soviet Union.

Campaign by Free Churches for Family and Home.

The Joint Committee for Co-operation Between the Free Churches in Sweden will launch an extensive campaign next autumn with the purpose of guarding the values contained in the words "Family and Home."

Already at the big Free Church rally, held in 1953, the attention was drawn to the problem of Family and modern Society, and since then the question has been studied by a special sub-committee, appointed by the Joint Committee, which has resulted in a book called "Has the Family Been Forgotten?"

The Committee is busily engaged in preparing material for the campaign: a poster, a leaflet dealing with family devotions, and a pamphlet for young people on ethics in connection with sexual problems. The Campaign proper will include public meetings on the matter all over the country, courses of lectures on problems of Home and Family, study circles and the like. The aim is, as emphatically as possible, to draw the attention of the public to the tremendous values of Home and Family, now in danger of being lost in a secularized community.

